

Concerning doing good to Posterity. 30

A

SERMON

PREACH'D before their

MAJESTIES

AT

WHITE-HALL,

On February the 16th, 1689-90.

Pſalm Lxxviii. 5, 6.

He eſtabliſh'd a Teſtimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Iſrael, which he commanded our Foreſathers, that they ſhould make them known to their Children.

That the Generations to come might know them, even the Children which ſhould be born, who ſhould ariſe and declare them to their Children.

By *Thomas Fenifon*, now Lord Archbiſhop
of *Canterbury*.

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SEERMON

MATTERS

WHITE-HALL

On Thursday the 11th. 1688-89

By the Rev. Mr. John Tillotson, Bishop of Exeter.
At the Lecture, in the Chapel of St. James's Palace.
On the 11th. of the Month of April. 1688-89.
The Text, Luke 11. 20. He saith, I drive out the Devil by the power of Beelzebub.

By the Rev. Mr. John Tillotson, Bishop of Exeter.

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PSALM Lxxviii. 5, 6.

V. 5. — *He established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Forefathers, That they should make them known to their Children.*

V. 6. *That the Generations to come might know Them, even the Children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their Children.*

THE Title of *Benefactor* does principally belong to those who are at present useful, and likewise oblige Posterity.

Such a one was King *David*, who Serv'd his own Generation very Faithfully; and having finish'd his Course, delivered his *Lamp* to the succeeding Age. Of this, as many are convinced, as either read the History of his Life, or peruse his *Psalms* with Application of Mind.

And it was his care, amongst his other pious Designs, to continue the *Memory* of God's Wonderful Works from Age to Age; to the end that the Consideration of his Power and Goodness might effectually move them to obey his Laws. Of such Remembrances they stood in great need, being apt no longer to think upon the Miracles of Divine Mercy, than whilst they saw them.

Wherefore God himself prescribed this way of teaching his Statutes, and rehearsing the History of his Mighty Acts, (and especially those at *Horeb*) to their Sons, and their Sons Sons. Deut. 4. 9.

And that the *Israelites* might not err in the repetition, he caus'd those Statutes and wonders to be written down; not leaving them to the uncertainty of Oral Tradition,

which sometimes either passeth by things of moment, or delivers them down very imperfectly, and too often brings it to pass, that the Legends of one Age, become History in those that follow.

God established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Fore-fathers; that they should make them known to their Children.

That the Generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.

The Argument of Doing Good to Posterity, being set forth in these words, not by any General Precept, but only by the especial Instance of propagating the Knowledge of his Law; I shall use them rather as the Occasion, than the Ground of this Proposition.

That a Good Man, according to his Talent and Circumstance, does endeavour in such manner to Do good in his time, that the next Age also may probably reap the benefit of it.

Concerning this kind of Charity, I purpose to consider.

1. How fit and just a thing it is to put it in Practice.
2. That, notwithstanding its fitness, there is too general a disuse of it.
3. whence it comes to pass that there is of Common a failure in so necessary a Duty.
4. By what means the Exercise of it may be made more regular, and more frequent among us; that so the ages to come may have just cause to Bless Almighty God for the advantages derived to them from this Generation.

1. Now, First of all, the doing of Good to Posterity, may appear a fit and reasonable Practice;

1. From a common Rule of Good and Evil.
2. From the Obligation which man is under, to imitate God.
3. From the Gratitude we owe to former Ages.
1. This is a Common Rule concerning Good, not only that it is to be done, but that we are to do what,

upon

upon the whole matter, is the *greatest good* which we are capable of doing in our Sphere and Condition. Now Good is increased as well by the *Duration* of Benefits, as by their *Magnitude* and *Number*; so that if the Good be equal in other respects, he that does the Charity that lasts *but a day*, does well; but he that does the Good that lasts *some years*, does still better. He who out of good will, gives a cup of cold water to a thirsty man, performs a Charitable Office; but that Person is, by much, the greater Benefactor, who opens a *Fountain* which from time to time may give refreshment to Man and Beast. Wherefore by the Reasons and Proportions of *Good*, a man is required, according to his ability, to look beyond the term of his own few and uncertain days, known only to God how few they are.

He is,

2. Required to *benefit Posterity*, that he may be a Follower of God in true Religion, which is the *imitation* of Him whom we worship: And by doing Charities which may last, we are made, in some measure like to Him; for all Generations partake of the Goodness of God.

He so framed the Material World at the beginning, that by the same Order of Nature (the same for the main) it might in its several Ages conveniently subsist; and the same *Sun* that shone on *Adam*, enlightens us.

God permitted men in the *first* Age of the World, to live very many Years, that by their Experience (especially in the Course of the Stars, which required length of time for observation) the *following* Ages might receive *useful* Instruction; *useful*, not only in secular Affairs, but in Religion; the *Heavens*, the more they understood, declaring the more the *Glory* of God.

He ordained the *Sabbath*, the *Passover*, the *Sacrament* of the Lords Supper, not merely for the men of any one Age, but as *Memorials* of the *Creation*, of the *Deliverance* out of *Egypt*, of the meritorious *Passion* of our Redeemer, for many Generations.

He

He sent his Blessed Son *once* to offer a Sacrifice, whose Virtue might be communicated to all true Christians, as long as there should be a Church on Earth.

He caused Holy *Scriptures* to be written for the good of all following times; and the things which were written of old, were written for our Admonition; upon whom *the ends of the world are come*. For instance; we are commanded to *Remember the wife of Lot*, who, so many Years ago, (looking *back towards Sodom*) was turn'd into a Pillar of Salt and Sulphur, *Gen. 19. 25. 26. S. Luke 17. 32. Deut. 29. 23.* being punish'd in the same extraordinary way with those unclean Sinners who remained in it.

3. There is not a fitter expression of our *gratitude to former Ages*, than a hearty endeavour to procure advantage to those who come after us, as we have received benefit by those who went before us; borrowing Light from their Light, and living upon the Effects of their Benevolence. If nothing had been done for us; in how miserable an Estate should we have come into the World and lived in it? Much more miserably than *Adam*, who in the state of Innocence, enjoy'd the Earth, without the Curse which Disobedience brought upon it. If all Arts, and Sciences, and Buildings, and other such Helps and Conveniences of *Humane Life*, were to be invented and begun with every Age, how rude, how mean would the condition of it be? How heavily would it be pressed with the burthen of Necessity? How much more painful and laborious would this render the Pilgrimage of man, which as it is, with all its advantages, has still its sufficient share of trouble? In what darkness had we sat in reference to the means of our Redemption, if it had not pleased the God of Wisdom, through the hands of the Christians of former Centuries, to deliver down to us the Holy Bible?

It does therefore well become us to have a sense of the Favours of those who died before our times, but still

Still live in their benefits; and gratefully to celebrate their just Praise, and to have a perpetual inclination, when we have not further power, *to go, and to do likewise.*

But as fit and just as this *Practise* is, there seems to be

2. *Too general a disuse of it*; Some are careful even to Anxiety, but they show that the solicitude is for their selves, by their backwardness in disposing of any thing so much as by a *WILL*. Some let *Receipts* and *Inventions* dye with them; by which great numbers in succeeding Ages might have been profited. Some are not provident for *their selves*; and therefore not likely to take due care for Posterity. They will not put a *stone* into a decaying Building, or drop an *acorn* into the Ground for the sake of those that shall follow them; much less have they a zeal for the supporting of Gods Church in difficult times, or the planting of true Religion in places that want the blessing of it: Insomuch that when they give up their wretched lives (as give them up they must, what aversion soever they have to it) they appear as a Place surrendered after a long and tedious Siege, where little remains, besides dead Corpses Rubbish, and Ruins.

And this puts me in mind of still a worse sort of men, who by their *inhumanity*, make such desolations in their times, as late Posterity can scarce repair. Their Talent lies not in promoting *Truth*, and *Holy Worship*, but in forcing Error and Idolatry; not in Building and Planting, but in plucking up and destroying. They are imitators of *Apollyon* the God of this World, whose Delight is Mischief, whose Triumphs are Barbarities. Fire and Sword are the Instruments of their *Glory*: They spare neither the *Bodies* of the Living, nor the *Monuments* of the Dead. They lay wast in a few hours, strong and beautiful Cities, which were the fruit of the Arts and Labours of former Times. One would think they would anticipate Doomsday it self, if their Force were

equal to their Pride and Malice: Though that sort of men, of all others in the World, have the least reason to hasten the Day of Judgment: When their Acts shall be rehearsed before the *Children that are yet unborn*, they will rise up with just indignation; and call their Memories accursed.

Of If (as we have proposed in the *third place*)

3. We inquire into the Causes of this Uncharitableness; we shall without much difficulty, find them amongst the *ill Principles* and disorderly *Lusts* and *Passions* and *Humours* of unreasonable men. As for example;

The *Atheistical*, if they follow the consequence of their Opinion, terminate their *Designs*, as they imagine they do their humane *Beings*, in this *Life*.

Those who live by *Sense*, whose Objects are *present*, have no regard for such as they shall never live to see; for such as are not capable of returning them immediate thanks, of making them Presents, of pleasing them with flatteries, of rendering them such services as are most grateful to flesh and blood.

The *stolish* will not be at the pains to build or to uphold, to manure or cultivate, to catechise a Child, or instruct a Servant, or discreetly to reprove an irregular Neighbour: They will let their own *Vineyards* be over-run, in their own times, with Briars and Thorns.

The *Careless* and *Voluptuous* are contented to think (if thinking be at any time the exercise of such Affectors of *of Ease*) that Peace and Plenty will last for their Days; and that is all the Eternity they care for; though by such neglect, Ruin often comes down upon their Heads before the term of their Life is expired. So it commonly happens to the *Prodigal* who inspect not their Affairs, and believe their Fortune to be sufficient for their Time; and in that Imagination, say to their Souls, *Take your ease*; and dream on till they are surprised by Poverty:

And, if their loose and swift way of living permits them to number many Years; there remain to them the fewest Supplies in *that Age* which has the most and greatest needs, the Age of Labour and Sor-
row.

Furthermore,

The *Ill-natur'd* hate the rest of the World, and are not pleased that the state of it should be bettered by them. Out of the abundance of such an ill Heart came that worst of Sayings pronounced by one of the Brutal Heathens, *When I leave the World, let Earth and Fire mingle*; or, let the Frame of Nature be immediately dissolv'd. He would have forborn those wicked Words, if he had but just thought of that more dreadful Fire which Divine Justice has prepared for the Uncharitable.

Moreover, the *Proud* and the *Designing*, who are themselves ignorant, will on purpose deny a liberal Education to those Children who are under their Conduct, lest they grow too wise and sensible for them.

From the same *Passion* it is, that Wicked Men endeavour to hinder both present and future Good, by depressing generous and worthy Persons, giving them occasion to complain, with that great Warrior *Belisarius*; " It was not a *Crime* that hurt us but En-
vy.

Likewise, the *Corvetuous* either stifle the *Wills* of the Charitable, or forbear to fulfill them; converting that to their own use, which was piously intended for others.

Also, the *Malicious* study on purpose to leave *That which must go to others*, in a ruinous Condition. It may be, without a House for shelter, or a Tree for shade, or a Field worn out with perpetual bearing, or a Paper for Direction, and for the determination of Strife; much more without a Prayer for the Prosperity of those who shall come after them.

Again, of some Men of revengeful Dispositions, it
has

has been said, That on their very *Death-Beds*, [a solemn Time in which nothing should supplant the Love of God and Man ; when their abundant Charity should, through Christ, prepare their way to the *Mercy* of God before whom they are suddenly to appear] that, being engaged in vexatious Suits and Quarrels with others, they have given it in charge to the Heirs of their Families, to keep up the Grudge, and to continue the Controversy from Generation to Generation.

Finally, Where this Evil Tempter abounds, it entails Trouble and Confusion : For it requires little skill to unfix and embroil, but a great deal to establish. May That (as we hope, and as we pray) be, for the future, the *Wisdom* of this Age, to the end that it may flourish in True Religion, in Unity, in Plenty, Peace and Health, and by that means become a Blessing to these Lands for ever.

These Evil *Principles*, *Lusts*, *Passions*, and *Humours* which I have mentioned, are the *Causes* of the Decay of that generous Charity so beneficial to the Ages to come.

But, *Fourthly*,

Let us not follow the inordinate Affections and unreasonable Customs of the Men of this World, but be prevailed with to imitate *David* : or rather, the God of *David*, who hath a Blessing for every Age ; and who, when he rested from the *Work of Creation*, did not forbear the *Works of Providence*.

To this purpose,

First, That we may be capable of practising this sort of Charity, the forementioned *Passions* are to be subdued by pious Consideration, by Prayer for the especial Grace of God, by firm and steadfast Resolution, by Conversation with Christians whose Hearts are enlarged, by reading the holy Scriptures, and in them, the History of God's Power and Goodness.

Secondly, being thus made capable of doing present and future Good ; that we may do it as we ought, the

the *Good-will*, the right *Scope*, the *Decence*, the *Justice* of It, are well to be weighed.

And, *First*, *Good-will* ought to be the Spring which moves Men that benefit those who succeed them ; for it is no *Virtue* to *leave that behind us*, which Death will not permit us to *carry away*. *Dives laid up Goods for many years*, and he left them to Others, without being to them a Benefactor ; for, *he laid them up for himself*, upon a vain and presumptuous supposition of long Life ; in which he was miserably disappointed, by the surprising Justice of that Righteous God, who said to Him, *Thou Fool ! this Night thy Soul shall be taken from thee*.

Again, This *Good-will* is to be directed to a right and profitable *Scope* ; that Charity may not be blinded by *Superstition*, which hath founded many *Societies*, and left great Revenues, and enriched many *Shrines*, to the *hurt of Posterity*, by promoting the Honour of false Deities and Saints ; and by encouraging a Worship from Age to Age, in which the True God can take no pleasure.

There is also to be observed, in this Practice, a *Decency*, which forbids a Man to be severely *Penurious* all his days, for *the doing a greater Good at the last*. It is true, He is not to be condemned for cutting off unnecessary Poms and Expences in order to so good an End : And he may be bold with himself. But, though there may be a *laudable Frugality*, there must not be a *sordidness* in his Selfdenial.

Add to this, That *Justice*, as well as *Decency* becomes all Men who piously design to be Benefactors to Posterity. They are not to do Evil that Good may come of it ; or, to be unjust, Oppressors, Extortioners in one Age, that they may be bountiful to another. Yet, such is the manner of the Covetuous, who love not Mankind, nor their very Off-spring as Men, but in the Quality of their second-selves : They run the hazard even of *Damnation*, for the greatning of those, who generally

rally spend with vicious profuseness all that Wealth which, with such guilt of Conscience they had gathered together.

Thirdly, Having found out such *Rules* as these for the governing of our Practice, we may render ourselves more fit for the discharge of so Excellent a Duty.

First, By removing certain Discouragements.

Secondly, By attending to some further Motives.

The *Discouragements* are of *Two Kinds*.

1. *Suspensions* of *Ability* to do such good.
2. *Hindrances* of *Willingness* in Those who are able to do it; and in some of them who are not ill inclined.

1. Men of *inferiour Condition* suspect their *Ability*; imagining, that he who would become a Benefactor, must be arm'd with great Power and Authority; indued with high degrees of Wisdom, and furnished with such heaps of growing Wealth, as may supply Charity, without sensible Diminution.

Whereas there are divers waies by which Persons, in meaner Circumstances, may, in *their Age*, be useful both to *that* and the *next*. A poor Man, as we read in *Ecclesiastes*, did by his prudent Counsel deliver a City. And that Place had, probably, the Benefit of his good Advice a long time after; tho' whilst his wisdom made him considerable, his Poverty exposed him to the Scorn and Neglect of the Proud and ungrateful. There are true Benefactors in the World besides such who have *Ability* to make *Publick Waies*, to repair *Breaches* of the Sea, to calm that which is tumultuous, the Rage of the People; to build Houses for God's Worship, to found Colledges and Hospitals, to subdue public Enemies, and to enact wholesome Laws, which are the Nerves of Society, and by the strength of which we a while (by God's Blessing) subsisted, though Popish Superstition did so furiously assault us. Many may communicate

to their Neighbours a wholsom *Medicine*, though they cannot erect a House for the Sick, and Wounded, and Impotent. Every Master of a Family in *Israel*. was obliged to shew his Children the Reason of the *Paschal Feast*, and to teach them the Law of God. Those, therefore, were not Performances out of their Power, for then they could not have been their Duty. And to Christians their great Master saith, What excellent things do ye? What do ye *more than others*? Much Good they may do by rehearsing the Holy History of God's Law and his wonderful Works before others, that they may learn it, and transmit it to the next Generation. Much Good they may do by teaching of necessary Doctrines to Youth, and by forming the manners of those who are likely to outlive them. They may instil into them betimes such Christian Principles as may grow up with them, and *bring forth Fruit in their Age*. He who hath a small proportion of Silver or Gold, may yet be sometimes capable of leaving behind him a more valuable Legacy: By giving the World a *Book of Piety*, such as that of the *Whole Duty of Man*, by which the judicious and modest Author hath done a greater Good to those who lived in and after his Time, than if he had poured forth other Riches upon them in overflowing measure.

Most are capable of doing a durable Charity by good *Example*, which may operate when they are dead, and gone. To how many Generations has the Instance of afflicted *Job* administred Courage and Support, whilst they have called it to Remembrance in the Time of their Trouble? And there is great need of *virtuous Example* for the ballancing of that which is *Bad*; the Contagion of which sticks like Leprosie in Families, Churches and Kingdoms. *Feroboam* the Son of *Nebat* made *Israel* to sin 1. King. 14. 16. [to commit that great Sin of Idolatry, by worshipping the true God by an Image] both in *his Time*, and after he was gone to answer both for his own and for other Men's Sins. But what Answer

swer could he make for either? Either was a Burthen too heavy for him to bear.

Then, *for the Charity of Prayer*, who is there that can nor call on God for a Blessing on Persons and Families, on Churches and States, after they shall have left this unquiet Stage, and that *Scheme of the World which passeth away*. *Exod. 20. 5, 6. C. 34. 7. Deut. 7. 9.*

In sum, all *Wicked Men*, as wicked, are hurtful, and all *Good Men*, as good, are beneficial both at present and for the future. Blessing and Cursing persue Families very often, according to the Righteousness or Impiety of the first Heads of them.

Secondly, There are *Discouragements* which hinder Men, who are able to do Good to other Generations, from being *Willing*. That is to say, The Instance of *Backwardness* in Public Mannagers to reward those who have undone themselves by some *useful Invention*, which generally ruins the first *Projectors*, whilst Posterity reaps the fruit of their Wit, Labour, and Expence. Also the Instances of *Failures* and *Frauds* of smothered or abused Legacies, in *Trust*, of the converting of that to the use of the Rich, which is bequeathed to the Poor; together with the Consideration of the *uncertainty of Times*, in which, by Wars and tumultuous *Violences*, the Effects of publick Charity do often perish.

There is much Truth in this *Objection*, but yet not so much as makes it *unanswerable*. *Useful Inventions* are often greater Charities than could have been done by the Pains and Wealth which they cost. *Frauds* and *Abuses* do not alwaies happen: They do not alwaies come; and *wo to them*, not who are injur'd by them, but by *whom they come*. And the Observation of such accidental Miscarriages should, indeed, *increase the Caution*, but not prevent the Charity of wealthy Men. It is, also, profitable for us to remember, That whatsoever Hazards *Good Works* run, the Soul that has done them in Christian Manner, shall be safe in the Hands of their Mediator. Christians know in whom they have believed,

ed, and how able he is to keep that which is committed to his Trust to that Day.

For the *uncertainty of Times and Seasons*, that's an Objection against doing Good in all Ages; for Heaven only is a Kingdom which cannot be shaken.

Wherefore, laying aside these Impediments, cast in our Way by too great a Degree of Jealousie, let us,

Secondly, Provoke our selves to Piety and to Good Works, by laying before our Thoughts such further *Motives* as these.

The *First* may be taken from the *true pleasure* which is found in all good *Acts*, and particularly of those of that kind of which we have been speaking. *Pleasure* naturally springs up in the Mind, when we think of any thing we much value, as *continuing and prospering*. A great degree of happiness consists in *hope*, and in hope cherished by *proceeding*. The Mind is *damp'd* when it is *stinted*, and when it sees an end of any thing in which it took content. And if pleasure is derived to us from the growth and progress even of our humblest *Plants*, much more shall we be pleased by the extent of our goodness to Christian Men, and in the duration of it. It is a blessed and comfortable Thought, that God will vouchsafe to use such frail earthen Vessels, as Instruments of good; by Instruction, by Example, by Prayers, by Alms, not only for the Span of our Life, but for many years to come. It was a strong Consolation to *Abraham*, that in his Off-spring all the *Nations of the Earth* should be blessed.

The *Second Motive* may be taken from *Honour*, which is *Fame* acquired by doing of *worthy things*. After this Men so naturally thirst, that some have affected the Name of *Benefactors*, Luke 22. 25. who have turn'd their Power into Oppression; for of that number (as *Philo* shews us) was *Caius Caligula*. They understood what was venerable, but they did not pursue it.

Even

Even the *Charity* which is *transient*, is honourable, and the Woman who with her Spikenard *anointed our Saviour to his burial*, is to this day honourably remembered wheresoever the History of the Gospel is read. And if to *transient good* our Praise is due, certainly to that which is *lasting* it ought not to be denied. Wherefore the *Holy Virgin*, considering the Salvation of the World by Christ, whose Mother she was become through God's special favour, believed not her *Magnificat* to be a vain-glorious *Hymn*, but said with humble Joy, *God hath regarded the lowliness of his Hand-maiden; for behold from henceforth all Generations shall call me blessed.*

But the *greatest Motives* of all are, *Conscience*, which requireth us to do good, as our Christian Duty.

Religious Fear, which sets before the *Unprofitable* (the unprofitable to Men, for God we cannot profit) the *Terrors of the great Day*. And, last of all,

Religious Hope, which moves us to be useful, in all our Capacities, whilst time lasts, upon the most comfortable prospect of an *Eternal Recompence*.

O the blessed Day, when those *who abound in the work of the Lord Jesus*, shall find *their labour not to be in vain in the same Lord*. When the penitent, pious, and righteous, shall behold the general Assembly of those *great Souls* who neither *liv'd nor dy'd to themselves*. May God prepare us for this Felicity, by Faith, and Repentance, and Good Works, through him who was both the *desire* and the *blessing of all Nations*, *Jesus Christ the Righteous*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost* be all Honour and Glory, World without end, *Amen*.